

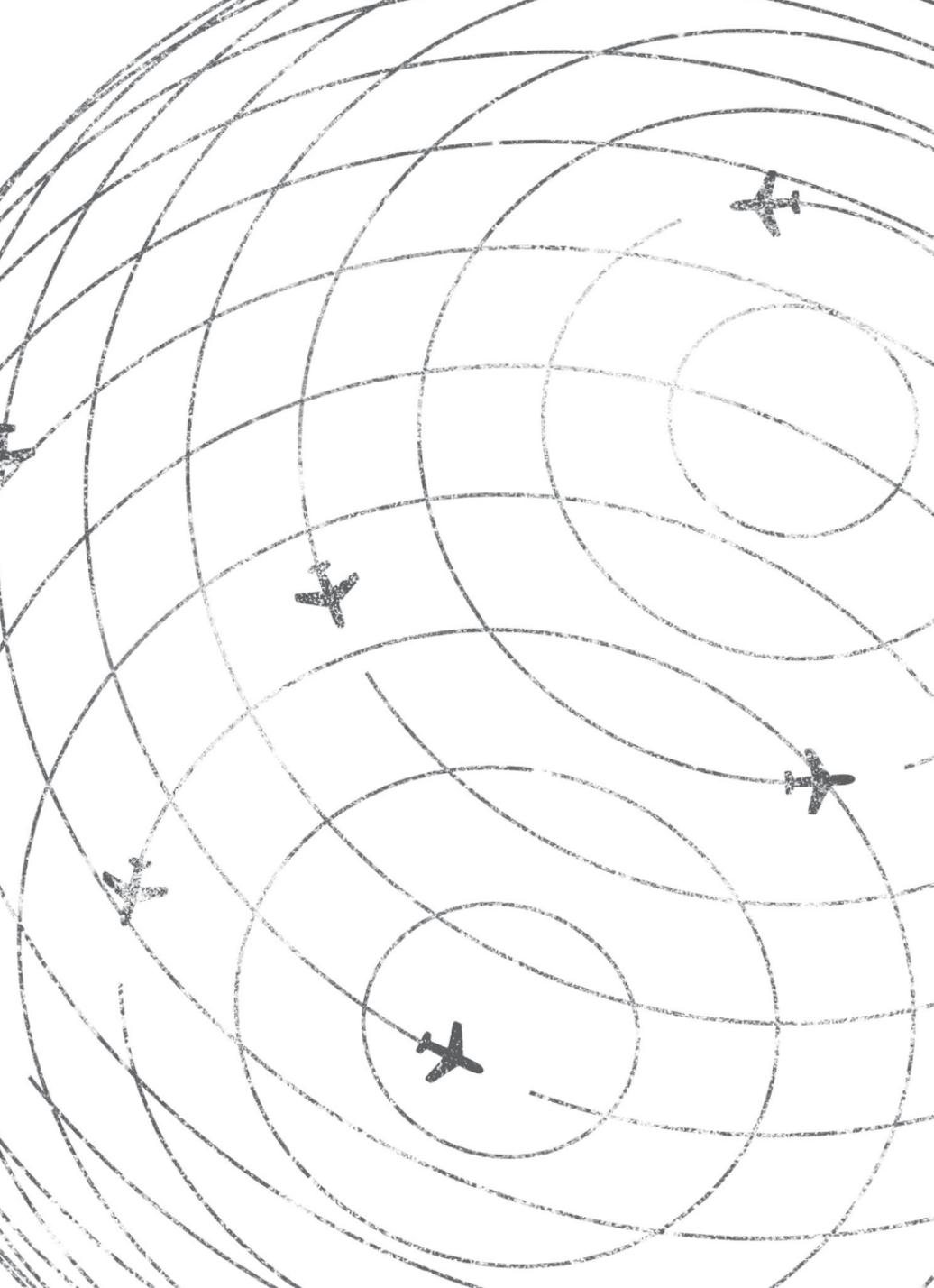
OUR RESPONSE TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

IV

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

GOSPEL REACTION:
AN ACTION PERFORMED IN
DIRECT RESPONSE TO THE
DEATH AND RESURRECTION
OF JESUS CHRIST





STUDY QUESTIONS

USING THIS STUDY

🔗 READ THE SCRIPTURE 5
TIMES A WEEK AND ANSWER
THESE QUESTIONS

DAY 1 - PRAY

Read through the passage, again if you've already done so. Spend time in prayer, confessing your sin and asking God to help you understand what His Word says. Pray for humility and courage to be obedient to the truth He reveals. Pray for the church as we study this passage together.

DAY 2 - OBSERVE

Write down any people, places, or things that stand out to you in this passage. What do you know about them? Are there any phrases that stand out?

DAY 3 - UNDERSTAND

What is the author saying? What message is he trying to convey? Write it in as few words as possible. What does it say about God? Humanity?

DAY 4 - REFERENCE

What other scriptures in the Bible address this same topic or issue? If you aren't sure, use some of the words or names you identified on day two and see if they appear anywhere else using a concordance, usually located in the back of any Bible.

DAY 5 - APPLY

What implications does this scripture have for your life? How does it apply? To you? To the culture around you? To the Church? Write down one application of this scripture and think of ways you can actively work to respond in obedience to God's Word.

5 X 5

⑤ PRAYERS

.....

One of the greatest moments in the book of Acts is the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-11). After the ascension, the disciples journeyed to Jerusalem and gathered together in the upper room. What must that conversation have been like? We can only imagine. But one thing we do know is they devoted themselves to prayer together in “one accord” (Acts 1:14). From this moment, we learn that the art of being disciples and making disciples is praying in one accord with each other. Therefore, this is exactly what we are going to do this entire year.

To pray in unity and with devotion, we are going to provide a structure that is congregation-centered yet with a personal bent. We are referring to this structure as our “5 x 5 Prayers.” Here’s how it will work:

5 PEOPLE

Choose 5 people, people who need to know God or who need to grow in God, that you will pray for during this portion of the Re:Acts series. Write them down below.

1	
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2	
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3	
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4	
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5	
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5 DAYS OF THE WEEK

Get into a rhythm in your life. The prayers don't need to be long, but they need to be consistent.

Please keep track of how God answers your prayers. We ask you to consider sharing your answered prayers by sending an email to 5x5answered@gcc.org.

Let's move together, as disciples, praying together for more people to make the name of Jesus known.

ONE PERSON AT A TIME

THE GOSPEL JOURNEYED ONWARD





ACTS 16:25-34

BY KYLE SMITH

.....

As a phrase full of emotion and symbolism, the “midnight hour” has inspired several popular songs. Midnight is the halfway point between sunset and sunrise making it the darkest hour. As such, it is now a reference to times of pain or suffering; it can also be seen as the opposite -- with it, a fresh day begins and we see another number on the calendar. It can be seen as the mark of a new start. One simple phrase, “midnight,” contains both light and dark, hope and despair.

RE:ACTS

In Acts 16:25-34 we see Paul and Silas facing both sides of the midnight hour. They encounter a possessed slave girl, and Paul cast out the spirit, angering the girl’s owners. Because of this, Paul and Silas are publicly beaten and put in the innermost prison with their feet clamped in iron stocks. The innermost part of the prison wasn’t a pleasant place; it was hot, filled with foul odors, and without light. It was dark. Midnight dark.

Instead of losing hope because of their surroundings, Paul and Silas looked to God in their suffering and intervened. While they were singing, an earthquake shook the prison and broke their chains. They didn’t run but rather used the supernatural event as an opportunity to share the gospel with the jailer who became a believer and was baptized with his family. A midnight hour that seemed like the end for Paul and Silas became the start of a new day and eternal life for many people. Deep darkness turned to great light.

This is an incredible story with clear implications: live your faith, look to God during suffering, and don't miss an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus.

REACT

Ⓐ

Who in your life needs the hope of Jesus? Who needs to hear that he understands their pain or loneliness and that he defeated death and gives eternal life and true joy? Pray for God to give you an opportunity and be ready to tell your story. Share what Jesus has done in your life and what he can do for someone else.

5X5

Ⓢ

Are any of your five facing a midnight hour? Pray that God would use those moments to demonstrate his power and glory in their lives.

STUDY

Ⓚ

Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 17:1-15

BY DAKOTA ZOOK

.....

I remember the first time I attempted to share the gospel with a friend whom I had been hanging out with at work for a while. He looked at me like I was crazy as I told him about Christ living and dying in our place so that we could be welcomed by the Father. We had been working together waiting tables for about six months at that point, but after that, we never talked again. The message of Jesus and his work when proclaimed is at times persuasive to some like in Acts 17, and yet others feel their world is being turned upside down. And in Jesus, it is!

RE:ACTS

Proclaiming another King is at the heart of gospel proclamation. Whether the other king we dethrone is Caesar, money, or self, it is always in opposition to the True King. “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also...” This phrasing is interesting because that is exactly what Jesus wants to do in everyone of our lives - turn our worlds upside down for his glory and mission.

As Paul enters Thessalonica, he immediately goes to proclaim the true King. Some believe, and their world is completely upended. No longer do they need to look to the Law for their justification, no longer do they need to look to their family tree as the basis of their acceptance with the Father. Jesus satisfied the Law and secured their acceptance completely when he suffered and rose for them! They are welcomed to the Father because of Jesus, and their world is upside down. The others rage against this

good news. Instead of joyfully accepting the offer of King Jesus, they cling to the law, to their family tree, to the old king. They cling so tightly that they believe the message of the gospel is turning their very world on its head.

Whatever things we cling to that keep our worlds from being turned upside down for the Gospel, may we let them go and let Jesus take control of them for his kingdom and mission. Like Paul, may we boldly proclaim the work of Jesus and find ourselves gladly turning to the True King.

REACT



Does the way that you live proclaim that Jesus is king and that you live in a world turned upside down by Him? Assess your own life and heart and you're sure to find things that don't. Write them down and ask another Christian to pray for these things and that your heart could ultimately trust Jesus in these areas.

5X5



Do you remember when your world was first turned upside down by the Gospel? What was that like? Pray that God would do the same thing in the lives of your 5.

STUDY



Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 17:16-34

BY LOUELLEN LOWE

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Who or what do Americans worship? To what or whom do Americans give ultimate priority of time, energy, or resources? Is it money? Security? Patriotism? Self-fulfillment? Children? Sports? Power? Things? Asked this way, we may see a society similar to what Paul encountered in Athens in Acts 17: 16-34.

RE:ACTS

When Paul arrived in Athens, the city had long passed its political prime, though it still served as a center of art, beauty, culture, and knowledge. Thrust into submission by Rome, we get a picture of people who spent a great deal of time philosophizing about life. What is most fascinating, though, is that there were more than 30,000 gods, including the “unknown god,” that they supposedly worshipped.

While waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him, Paul toured the town, and scripture says he was so provoked by what he saw that he was moved to spend his time reasoning with anyone who would listen. Paul just couldn't help himself; he had to tell the truth of the Gospel to a city drowning in idolatry.

Scripture says Paul addressed those inside the synagogue, many who were likely opposed to the idolatry they encountered in their city but who, for whatever reason, were powerless to affect change. Perhaps they were too consumed with their own religious experience to care, or maybe they were afraid.

Paul was provoked in his spirit by the idolatry because he was utterly convinced that to worship anything other than the One True God was not only a waste of time but was also insulting to the God who deserves all of our affection. Because he was convinced, he seized any available opportunity to speak truth to the masses. We see that Paul communicated truth in a way which resonated with the listeners, even going so far as to quoting one of their poets. How he communicated truth mattered as much as that he communicated it.

Paul went toe-to-toe with some of the most educated people Athens had to offer, and he held fast to the Gospel. Some responded, some didn't, but to do any less would be to deny the power of the Gospel.

REACT	④	Do you know the truth? Are you prepared to speak it? Start with the Gospel. Commit to reading scripture daily and practice communicating the Gospel whether in writing or with a friend.										
5X5	⑤	Read Acts 17: 22-34 again and pray that your 5 would experience the One True God either for the first time or in a new and fresh way.										
STUDY	⑥	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Day 1</td> <td>Day 2</td> <td>Day 3</td> <td>Day 4</td> <td>Day 5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pray</td> <td>Observe</td> <td>Understand</td> <td>Reference</td> <td>Apply</td> </tr> </table>	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Pray	Observe	Understand	Reference	Apply
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5								
Pray	Observe	Understand	Reference	Apply								

ACTS 18

BY DANIEL EDSON

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RE:ACTS

Before Kameron and I got married, we had many conversations about expectations, kids, life goals, mission, finances, etc... One conviction we had was that we would have the same bank account, enabling us to wisely discuss our finances together. However, I don't have to physically be present when Kameron uses our credit card at Altar'd State, and she doesn't have to physically be present when I spend money at Home Depot or Lids. Even though we make a conscious effort to manage our finances together as Kameron and Daniel, our bank considers that account accessible by either one of us – Kameron or Daniel. This “and/or” principle applies to many facets of our life together, and we have to intentionally walk in an “and” way of living.

In Acts 18, we see a beautiful, biblical example of marriage in the life of Aquila and Priscilla. We encounter this couple who fled from Rome and landed in Corinth during Paul's journey that took him to Corinth. When the Bible speaks of Aquila and Priscilla, it always mentions them together, never separate from one another. They made their living together in the marketplace as tent makers, which is how they met Paul. Working together is not a mandate of marriage; it is, however, an example that we must be willing to give more than we take from our spouse in marriage.

We gather that if they weren't followers of Jesus before meeting Paul, he had such an impact on his new friends that they grew in love and worship of God together. We even see at the end of Acts 18 that they together explained many

great things about Jesus to the teacher Apollos. Through Paul’s writing in I Corinthians and Romans 16, we see them grow in the Word and serve the Lord together by hosting a church in their home.

Aquila and Priscilla live together, work together, suffer together, come to know and love Jesus together, and spread the Good News together. This is what makes their marriage complete – knowing, loving, and serving Jesus together. Marriage is made great by living in an “and” state of mind and having true oneness. True oneness can only be found in Jesus Christ. Aquila and Priscilla are an example of what marriage is about: reflecting the goodness of Christ and glorifying God together through living and serving God.

REACT



If you are married, what does your marriage reflect? In your pursuit of Jesus, what steps can you take together to continue making your marriage great? If you’re single, what about Aquila and Priscilla’s life together can encourage you in your pursuit of Jesus? What expectations shape your future life goals, with or without a spouse?

5X5



Read Romans 2:4 and pray for the kindness of God to be seen by your five, that they would come to repentance.

STUDY



Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
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1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-16

BY DOUG CLARK

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Forbes Magazine published an article in April of 2012 entitled, “The Four Divorce Alternatives.” The article began this way: “No two marriages are the same, and so it only follows that no two divorces are the same, either.” It went on to talk about four different ways a couple can achieve a legal divorce. As I read the article, it dawned on me that that the author, Jeff Landers, assumed that divorce was a viable option, and maybe even a forgone conclusion, for a marriage in struggle.

RE:ACTS

In the verses we are studying this week, 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, Paul expresses the serious nature of the marriage covenant. Marriage is not something to be entered into lightly, nor is it something that should be ended haphazardly or for convenience. Paul calls us to think about the peril that accompanies the decision to end a marriage in divorce. In these verses he speaks of the importance of marital commitment, even to the extent that if a couple does divorce, their first Godly priority is to be reconciled to one another.

As we read and study, we find that this is more than a prohibition against divorce, this is a plea and a command for husbands and wives to love one another. It is a call to live the unselfish and other-centered life that godly marriage requires. Divorce shouldn’t be on the table not only because God commands it not to be, but also because husbands and wives should never get to the place in marriage where divorce is considered. This passage is a call to avoid the pitfalls and traps that lead one to believe that divorce is the only option.

To love one another requires husbands and wives to abide in the Lord and allow the Holy Spirit to produce in them

the fruit of patience, kindness, selflessness and being other-centered. It is allowing the Spirit to cultivate in us self-control, long-suffering, and the willingness to forgive. The marriage covenant is a sacred decision, a holy commitment, and an act of worship intended to be a life-long commitment for men and women.

REACT

If you are married, no matter what state your marriage is in right now, take a step toward your spouse. Take responsibility and seek forgiveness, extend forgiveness, find a way to serve them, or put forth a display of your love and commitment to them. Whatever it may be, do it today. If you are divorced and remarried, love your spouse in the way that we have just described. Don't give up even when it seems excruciatingly difficult. If you are divorced and not remarried pray that God would change you and heal your marriage. Certainly, God in his power could change the hearts of people who have hurt one another. If you aren't married, pray for those who are and pray that your affection for God would truly be undivided as Paul speaks of in scriptures.

5X5

Pray for your 5, married or unmarried. Pray that they would see the love of Christ displayed in their lives and in the lives of believers so much so that they would want to know more.

STUDY

Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
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1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-5

BY DANNY LOEFFELHOLZ

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“Sex” is a word which tends to catch peoples’ eye. Perhaps it is because sex is a term and an action that has been relevant to every culture, both traditional and modern, throughout all human history. For some cultures, sex has been controversial, taboo, shameful, encouraged, discouraged, monogamous, or promiscuous. Yet sex has been an issue that every culture has addressed, and it appears that the men and women within the Corinthian church during the 1st century were no exception.

RE:ACTS

In 1 Corinthians 7, the apostle Paul brings to the surface the Corinthian Christian’s view of sex, which apparently was a negative one. They perceived that it was not good for a man to have sexual relations with a woman (v.1). But Paul responds, arguing that sex is not evil but good. Paul goes on to encourage husbands and wives not to abstain from sex in their marriage and to only abstain from sex only for a limited time if necessary and then to come back together. Paul encouraged this view of sex because he understood that God would not create and give this gift for marriage if it wasn’t good.

In what way has God intended for the gift of sex to be experienced? God’s design for sex is for one man and one woman within the exclusive, permanent, legal commitment of marriage. Why would this be the case? Because sex is a God-designed way to say to another person, “I belong completely, exclusively, and permanently to you.” This commitment and intimacy cannot be achieved outside

of the commitment of marriage. What an incredible reflection this is of the permanent, exclusive, intimate, and covenantal relationship we can have with Christ!

This may or may not be your personal experience and view of sex. Has sex been taboo to you? Has sex been a source of guilt and shame? Has it been an area of discouragement for you and your spouse? Has it created a weight of emotional baggage? Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is hope, especially when it concerns sex. In Christ, everything sad will come untrue as our deepest brokenness is overwhelmed by unimaginable redemption. In Christ, God has offered us the opportunity to know and enjoy what He has made right and good for His Glory.

REACT	Ⓐ	Take time to consider your view of sexual intimacy. Is it healthy? Is it biblical? Write down your thoughts as your process and seek out godly counsel as necessary.					
5X5	Ⓢ	Sex can be incredibly beautiful or profoundly destructive depending on how one engages. Pray for your five to come to see God's design for this area of their lives and how it reflects His goodness and mercy.					
STUDY	Ⓚ	<table border="1"><tr><td>Day 1 Pray</td><td>Day 2 Observe</td><td>Day 3 Understand</td><td>Day 4 Reference</td><td>Day 5 Apply</td></tr></table>	Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
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LIVE ON MISSION

THE GOSPEL
WILL GO
WHEREVER
YOU GO



1 CORINTHIANS 13

BY KYLE SMITH

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Our young family was eager for the first night in our new home; a new season was beginning and we were excited. After spending several years renovating our previous home, I was thankful to move into a home that needed nothing. Then I heard from the bedroom, “Woah! Watch out! Oh no!” A bed frame that had been leaning on a wall fell and took part of the wall with it. I wasn’t thrilled with the unplanned demolition.

RE:ACTS

A few days later the hole was gone! My wife covered it with our framed wedding photograph decorated with the words of 1 Corinthians 13. The hole that once frustrated me now provides comfort with my favorite marriage metaphor; through any challenge or difficult season, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Only when two people are vulnerable enough to commit to each other, ‘til death do they part, will there be momentary hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and struggles, yet love endures.

We gain the ability to truly love others once we know the love of Jesus. This chapter isn’t a to-do list for marriage and relationships, but a reminder of what we already have.

Love is laid over and covers our failings as prideful and sinful people. How? More than a mere description of love, 1 Corinthians 13 is an illustration of the purest love - Jesus. The greatest love was poured out for us on the cross when

Jesus gave his life for ours. We can love, because Jesus first loved us. Jesus is love.

When you are frustrated, irritated, or angry, remember that we have access to a love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Like the hole in our wall, weak spots in any relationship can be covered in that love.

REACT



Take time to consider your love for others. Does it reflect the love we read about in I Corinthians? Pray that God would increase your love, this kind of love, for others.

5X5



Pray that your 5 people would see themselves and others in the context of Jesus' love.

STUDY



Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 19:17-41

BY CIMBER CUMMINGS

.....

Cash and kids - two things we're told never to mess with when it comes to other people. Assuredly, the quickest way to fire someone up is by threatening either their cash flow or their offspring, and in Acts 19 we see this unraveling for Demetrius, an Ephesian silversmith whose whole operation is about to go under. His once thriving business of manufacturing Greek idols is rapidly diminishing due to the spread of the Gospel.

Cue the riots.

RE:ACTS

Demetrius and his craftsmen are angry and worried - not only for loss of business, but also for loss of respect for their esteemed goddess, Artemis. So they take to the streets - dragging along Paul's companions to answer for this outrage.

Here, we see two cultures colliding. First, we see an occultist Ephesian culture thriving on sorcery, exorcism, and idolatry as profit, and second, there is the culture of the early Christian church, fueled by the Holy Spirit and focused on the saving work of Christ. The differences between these cultures' doctrines are even more emphasized by their physical proximity.

Perhaps the same could be said of us today. In one aspect, we see a culture around us that idolizes power, profits, and personal success, thriving on reputation yet often devoid of substance. Conversely, we see the body of Christ, still being fueled by God's Spirit and saving power, yet experiencing a different form of greatness - one which comes through service, sacrifice, and a personal walk with Jesus.

Could it be that the stark contrast of today's culture against God's way of life for His people is completely purposeful? What better way for God to display true and abundant life than by placing His people next to those who are searching for it in all the wrong ways?

As God's children, we are meant to tell His story through our lives and our words, to do unashamedly, yet peacefully, in our neighborhoods, at our cubicles, through our conversations, and in every other manner in which our paths intersect with the world.

REACT

4

Think about how God has strategically placed you in paths that intersect with those who do not know Him. Write down those places, and write down the names of those people you encounter consistently. How can God use you, your family, and your resources to be the light of Christ to them? Write down how the Lord can use you for His glory as you cross paths with those who don't know Him this week.

5 X 5

5

Pray and ask God to give you the courage to draw your five people more closely into your life. Can you share a meal with them this week? If so, when? Can you attend an event that is important to them? If so, what? Ask God to help you share His goodness and grace with them.

STUDY

Q

Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 20:25-35

BY TIM CONNOR

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Do you know any generous people? You know, the kind of people who invite you out for dinner AND pay for your meal? Generous people truly believe what Paul is reminding the leaders of the church of Acts – “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

This is contrary to the messages we receive all around us. As a child, it’s all about what we “got” for our birthday or Christmas. Even as Christians, we spend a lot of time talking about what we receive at salvation – eternal life. It’s easy to focus on what we get out of the deal. Just watch TV for 15 minutes and you’ll see plenty of messages telling us what we can get to make us happier.

RE:ACTS

We honestly believe that accumulating things will make us happy. We don’t realize (or we forget) that everything we own is given to us by God. Instead, our attitude is that we worked hard for it, we bought it, and now it’s ours to enjoy.

I’ve met plenty of people who seem to have it all, yet they seem so unhappy. I’ve never met an unhappy generous person.

Generous people understand that everything they have – their time, their resources, their talents - are given to them by God. They make themselves and their possessions available to the community to build His Kingdom. They fight the pressure to only have more and instead give lavishly.

REACT

Do you have a generous heart? Pray that God would increase your desire to give. Make a conscious decision to live generously today.

5X5

Ask God to show you how you can give generously to your five this week. Maybe it's simply sharing a cup of coffee together. Maybe it's a financial gift. Get creative and show the love of Christ in a tangible way.

STUDY

Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 21:1-15

BY MOLLY PONTIUS

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Obedience requires sacrifice. It's dying to self. It's putting the will of Christ above my will and bending my selfish prideful knee to his Lordship. It's acting on the fact that he is the real deal and worthy of the risk I take to follow his lead.

Long ago, Steve and I were young missionaries leading a team of 23 on a mission trip to Mexico. We didn't have a lot going for us, but we had a passion for Jesus exploding in our hearts and a burning desire to model Jesus to the people we had the privilege to lead.

Believe it or not, we traveled from Texas to Tecpan, Mexico in a school bus. A pastor begged for a team to come to this coastal, unreached area where he desired to start a new gospel church. We were convinced that this was God's assignment for us.

It wasn't long before the bus began to have problems. There was significant concern from team members about driving through the mountains at night. A couple of our students were sick, and fear of being raided by banditos took root. The team wanted to stay put. What about all that God had shared with us about his heart for these lost people?

My husband faced a hard decision. Should we risk the health and safety of our people by continuing? He asked the team to pray for direction, and even then, they wanted to bail, to protect themselves and do what seemed logical. Steve, however, had a strong conviction that we should go forward in obedience and not let circumstances stand in the way. So we went.

What happened next is to the glory of God. We limped through the night, and by morning found most sickness gone. We were able to acquire the bus parts we needed, and we made it to Tecpan. In Tecpan, we showed the Jesus film on the side of the bus, and the local people were moved by the life of Jesus. They came to us asking, “What must I do to get saved?” The pastor didn’t want emotional decisions, so he sent them home with Bibles and told them if they were serious and wanted to lay down their lives to come back the next day. They came in droves and lined up down the street and around the corner to make a decision for Christ.

Our obedience to God and our trust in him allowed him to use us, but we almost chose our will instead of his and let circumstances rob us of seeing God change lives. Paul says in Acts that what matters is not what happens to him, but rather what matters is what the Master Jesus does through his obedience.

REACT	 <p>In this country, it’s hard to imagine giving our rights and freedoms away, but that’s exactly what Jesus did for our sakes. How can you give yourself to your co-workers, friends, and neighbors this week?</p>						
5X5	 <p>Consider the five people on your list. What is it going to cost you to be his ambassador to them? Pray that God would show you what you may need to sacrifice to do so in his name.</p>						
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ACTS 21:37-22:21

BY LOUELLEN LOWE

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They wanted to kill him. It was truly a raucous scene: people shouting, fists raised, Paul beaten and bloody, and the Romans just trying to make sense of it all. Some of the crowd probably didn't know why, but taken in by mob mentality, they shouted for his death. The chaos so overwhelmed the ruling authority that he couldn't decipher what charges they laid against Paul. This scene isn't unfamiliar when we read about Paul; it's what happens when one decides that to live is Christ and to die is gain.

RE: ACTS

Paul knew the message of the Gospel would enrage the Jews; a former Pharisee, he was aware of exactly how subversive the message of Christ would seem to them. The Jews' status with Rome rested tenuously on their ability to keep their own in check. Christianity, though, felt wild, unfettered, and utterly uncontrollable. In the face of this volatile crowd, Paul did the only thing he thought might win a few souls to Christ: he told his story. From his days of persecuting Christians, to the encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, to his complete transformation as a Christ-follower, Paul recounted it all. He laid himself bare for the possibility that even one might come to know Christ.

If you keep reading in chapter 22, we see that the Jews still wanted to kill Paul, even after his heroic testimony. Furthermore, we read that Paul could have avoided everything by invoking his Roman citizenship. But the cause of Christ was more important than his self-preservation;

that others would come to know Christ was more important to him than living.

It is easy to look at Paul's story and think that ours will never measure up; but the point of Paul's story isn't him - it's Christ in him. Furthermore, Paul is under no illusion that his story is what saves; it's Christ who saves. So great was his joy in salvation, so great was his love for Christ that he had to tell his story so that if one person came to know Christ and his love for humanity, it would all be worth it.

As Christ-followers, one of the most powerful tools for sharing the Gospel with others is telling our own story of how Christ changed us. Paul knew who he was and who Christ was in him; it was because of who Christ is that he couldn't help but tell his story to others. Are you ready to tell your story?

REACT	④	Have you ever told your story of salvation to someone? If you haven't, find a friend with whom you can practice. Write it down. Not only will it be helpful to reflect on all that God has done, it will prepare you to give a reason for the faith that you have.				
	⑤	Share your story with one or more of your five this week. Pray beforehand that they would see Christ in that story.				
STUDY	⑥	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
		Pray	Observe	Understand	Reference	Apply

ACTS 23:1-11

BY JON JENZ

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RE:ACTS

Several years ago, I interviewed for the same ministry job at two different churches in Lansing, Michigan. The first question at each church interview told me everything I needed to know about which job to take, if offered. The pastor of the first church started my interview by saying, “Tell us about your relationship with Jesus.” Great question! Jesus first. The pastor of the second church started my interview by asking, “Tell us where you sit on the political Christian spectrum.” I was taken aback that his first question revolved around my political stance. I was fortunate to have been offered both positions and went with church #1. But it struck me how different the approach of these two churches; it was certainly communicated what the leadership of each church valued.

In Acts 23, verse 1-11, we find the apostle Paul in front of the Jewish high council for political reasons. The council was fearful of this new sect of people called Christians, and they knew Paul was one of the leaders of this movement. Paul makes a bold statement to the Council: “Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.” (v1) This offended the high priest who then immediately resorted to violence.

Paul faced many moments such as these as he testified to the Gospel of Christ. What is encouraging as we read this trial is that Paul kept first things first. He always comes back to what is most important - Jesus and His victory over sin and death. What composure! What keeps a man so steadfast during such opposition?

The answer is simple: grace. As we read Acts 23, we must remember that Paul was a Pharisee who persecuted and ordered the murder of Christ-followers. As he stood before the Jewish council that day, Paul was looking in the mirror at what he had been some 20 years prior. Paul had been completely changed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Grace was his catalyst. His own transformation was proof of that grace.

The day of those two interviews years ago, if I had not been completely transformed by the grace of Jesus, I would likely not have even noticed the difference in those two opening questions. It is His grace that continues to spur me to BE a disciple of Jesus and MAKE disciples of Jesus every day that I live.

Have you been forgiven much? How has God's grace changed you?

REACT	④	Read 1 Corinthians 15. Memorize 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Sit with Jesus today without any distraction (no phone), allow His grace to fill your heart and mind.					
5X5	⑤	Allow the grace of Jesus to motivate the way you pray over your 5 people each day this week. Pray that they would experience the grace of Christ.					
STUDY	⑥	<table border="1"><tr><td>Day 1 Pray</td><td>Day 2 Observe</td><td>Day 3 Understand</td><td>Day 4 Reference</td><td>Day 5 Apply</td></tr></table>	Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
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LET LOVE TRAVEL

SHARE
THE TRUTH
THROUGH THE
WAY YOU LIVE



ACTS 24:24

BY LUKE SWANSON

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RE:ACTS

Thinking back, I can easily recall past situations in which I had the opportunity to share the Gospel with complete strangers, mild acquaintances, or even close friends. The feelings cannot be forgotten. With sweaty palms, weak knees, and a potentially dangerous heart rate, I would sit in a moment of intense decision-making: did I really need to talk to this person about Jesus? Or I would think, “I’m sure they already know who Jesus is; they don’t need me to share with them.” Despite the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and despite the obvious call on my life to share the faith I so gladly enjoyed, I somehow always conjured excuses to sit on the sideline. The mood wasn’t right, or they looked a little intimidating, or I wasn’t quite prepared to quote the necessary scripture. My excuses were endless. I’m describing my struggles in past tense, but permit me to confess how much this struggle is still a reality in my life. Can anyone relate?

As I contemplate my tendency to make excuses, the boldness of Paul in Acts 24 hits me hard. Under persecution, imprisonment, and constant threats against his life, Paul boldly speaks about his faith in Christ Jesus—even to the very individuals who have the power to end his life. (v. 24) Paul allowed neither his circumstances nor his fear of rejection to hinder the call on his life to share the Gospel. In verse 24, Paul not only talks about the person of Christ Jesus to Governor Felix and Drusilla, but he also provides discourse on the righteousness found in Christ Jesus. Paul is keenly aware of Felix’s unrighteous living, yet He boldly proclaims the

righteousness found in salvation through Jesus Christ. Could Paul's boldness be a derivative of his new-found salvation in Jesus Christ? We know from Philippians 1:21 that Paul is not intimidated by death - much less by rejection. Paul's actions are simply reactions to the Gospel's work in his own life.

Our reaction to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is to talk about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! No matter the individual, our call as disciples of Christ is the same: proclaim Jesus Christ. As I consider Paul's Gospel reaction in Acts 24 and its implications in my own life, I pray you will do the same.

REACT

Ⓐ

No matter your circumstances, are you proclaiming Christ Jesus? What is holding you back from boldly sharing the joy, peace, and righteousness to be found in Christ Jesus? Be honest and pray that your joy in Christ would be too full to keep to yourself.

5X5

Ⓢ

Pray for an opportunity to share Christ with one of your not yet believing 5. Use other opportunities to go deeper with any of your 5 who need to grow in their faith. Be bold! Be humble. Be joyful.

STUDY

Ⓚ

Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 25:6-27

BY EDGAR GALDÁMEZ

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RE:ACTS

In Acts 25, we find Paul has been imprisoned by the Romans for two years. Festus, the new procurator of Judea (lasting only a couple of years), visits Jerusalem as a token of his good will. The first issue presented to him is the problem of Paul. During his hearing with Festus, Paul suspects his intention to take him to Jerusalem to be tried (he was not ignorant of Jewish treachery as he was a former religious leader) and asserts his right to be tried before Roman rulers and law. He is not willing to be given up to them as a favor and points to his innocence, asking to be shown where he is wrong.

Paul is willing to accept the punishment of death if he is guilty of crimes. However, there is no proof, and therefore, as a Roman citizen, he appeals to Caesar for trial.

Paul could have asked to be freed. He knew, though, that the Lord was guiding his steps and that he must appear before Caesar to share the Gospel there as well (Acts 23:11). He wasn't looking for an easy way out to gain his freedom, but rather he aimed to follow God's sovereign will for his life.

Paul shows us with his example that we ought to trust the sovereignty of God in our lives even when things don't go our way or our rights are violated. We do have a right to be judged by the rule of law but ultimately, whatever the injustice done to us, all will be used by God to fulfill his purpose for our lives. We should strive to live with a clear conscience before God and accept the consequences if we do wrong.

REACT

④

Have you been looking for the easy road in your walk with Christ? Is he calling you to deeper faith in him, even when the going gets tough? Pray that God would increase your faith and courage so that you can face the hard thing.

5X5

⑤

Are any of your five facing hardship? Pray that they would have faith in and turn to the One who sustains.

STUDY

⑥

Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 26:6

BY JULIE CONNOR

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Hope. Such a small word carries so many emotions and expectations. We use hope to describe everything from wishing to confident expectation. This hope that Paul talks about in Acts 26 is much more than wishing or even confident expectation. This hope leaves all those other kinds of hope in its dust. It is “an essential and fundamental element of Christian life, so essential that, like faith and love, it can itself designate the essence of Christianity” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary).

RE:ACTS

Paul tells us where his hope lies: “in the promise made by God to our fathers...” God promised salvation and resurrection from the dead to His people. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. The salvation that the Jews had been earnestly longing for had come, and they denied Him. This hope is a funny thing. The Jews longed for it yet refused to accept it when Jesus offered it. But Paul understands that view. It was a view he once held himself until he personally encountered the author of hope.

The next few verses encourage and challenge me. Paul doesn’t launch into a deep theological exposition on Christ or salvation or the resurrection from the dead. He shares his story of how this hope reached out to him on the road to Damascus and radically changed his life. He shares the transformation from chasing after an empty hope to believing in the Person who offers rock solid, unchanging, undeniable, life-altering hope. He shares this hope before a king, just as Jesus said he would in Acts 9:15.

We might not ever stand before a king, but each of us has our own story of encountering the person of Jesus and the eternal hope that He offers. 1 Peter 3:15 (NLT) encourages us this way, "...And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it." Paul showed us the best way, not a wordy, theological answer, but simply by sharing his story of how he encountered Christ and found hope forever.

REACT

4

Are you ready to share your story with the next person who asks? Why or why not? What would it take for you to be ready? Do it.

5X5

5

Pray for opportunities to share your hope in Jesus with the 5 people on your list.

STUDY

Q

Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 7:54 - 8:3

BY STEPHEN WICKLIFFE

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RE:ACTS

The year was 2004. It was a year that would entertain the world with the summer Olympic games in Athens, Greece. It was also the year that I would travel to a lesser known area of northeast China - Harbin, China to be exact. Known for its Winter Ice Festival, I arrived in the midst of a heat wave and the midnight sun that revealed a palpable persecution directed at Christ-followers. United by the Gospel, my relationships with Chinese Christ-followers fostered conversations that revealed a people living with the constant threat of persecution. Despite the persecution that fueled invasions of house churches and detention of Christ-followers, each person was resilient even to the point of death, knowing that when they decided to follow Christ, it would cost them their lives. Thirteen years later, persecution persists in China and many other countries around the world.

The overwhelming evidence of global persecution demands that each Christ-follower set aside distractions and grapple with a biblical response. God could have put the Church in a thriving, friendly environment, but He purposefully chose not to do that. In Acts 7 and 8, we inherit a Biblical word picture testifying to persecution in the form of martyrdom. The martyr, Stephen, went before the Sanhedrin and knew the court had a history of murdering prophets because of their offensive message. Nevertheless, Stephen remained true to the Gospel message he had been given by the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the arduous process, Stephen never asked the Father to remove the persecution; instead, he asked that

God would receive his Spirit and forgive his attackers. Of course, in a way that only God could provide, He would later honor Stephen's request in the life of Saul. In the days and years following the stoning of Stephen, a passionate, full-court press against Christ-followers was ignited. In family after family, suspected Christ-followers were dragged from their homes and imprisoned or murdered. The persecution has not ceased.

As I pray for the persecuted Christ followers in China, North Korea, Libya, Somalia, Indonesia, and others, I keep in mind that they do not want me to pray for the persecution to cease because they have seen how the number of Christ followers has multiplied. Consequently, I cannot help but wonder if God placed the church in a hostile, persecuted environment because He knew that it would thrive when desperation and adversity were present. How then should we respond to persecution? We pray.

REACT	④	Make it a point to pray for the persecuted Church around the world every day this week. If you need resources, visit www.persecution.com/ .					
5X5	⑤	As you pray for the 5 people on your list that do not know Christ, pray that persecutors would see the winsome ways of the persecuted and follow Christ!					
STUDY	⑥	<table><tr><td>Day 1 Pray</td><td>Day 2 Observe</td><td>Day 3 Understand</td><td>Day 4 Reference</td><td>Day 5 Apply</td></tr></table>	Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
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ACTS 27:21-26

BY BETTY O'MAKER

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There is a saying that no one likes: "I told you so." In this passage Paul seems to say just that stating, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss." However, I do not think Paul is indulging in a self-glorifying moment of proving himself right.

It is true that his earlier warning was rejected, and as a consequence, the men ended up in the midst of a storm in which "neither sun nor stars appeared for many days." Ancient navigators had no compass but guided the ship by the sun and stars. Not being able to see stars or sun for many days left them adrift in a stormy, turbulent sea with no sense of direction. They lost hope. Paul, however, had a different compass - a guidance system of absolute reliability even in the midst of the storm; therefore, he is able to bring a message of hope from God.

Paul reminds the men of his earlier warning, and in doing so, he reinforces the idea that despite the dire circumstances, they can rely on the truth of the news he now brings. That very night, the God he serves sends a heavenly messenger and saves Paul and everyone on board the ship.

Paul had the assurance that he was safe but was not satisfied in his safety alone. He provides a message of encouragement and hope to those who were without hope stating, "So take

RE:ACTS

courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said.” He pointed them to the one system of guidance they could absolutely rely on even in the midst of life’s storms.

REACT



Someone you know might be going through a difficult time right now, or maybe it is you. Spend time in prayer and in the scriptures. Let God be the compass that guides the way and provides a word of encouragement and of hope to weather the storm.

5X5



Pray for your 5 people, and ask God to give you words of hope and encouragement for them.

STUDY



Day 1
Pray

Day 2
Observe

Day 3
Understand

Day 4
Reference

Day 5
Apply

ACTS 28:23-31

BY ANDREW PEACOCK

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Everyone has “that friend” - the friend who’s ridiculously slow to respond to their phone. In my circle, I’m “that friend.” Occasionally I’ll reply immediately, but more often hours go by before I stop and return messages. Sometimes I’ll start to respond to a text message and get side-tracked before I hit send, leaving anyone with an iPhone staring at those three dots, wondering what I might be typing and why it’s taking so long.

RE:ACTS

Acts has been an incredible journey. We’ve read about the spread of the gospel and the earliest days of the Church. We’ve seen the stoning of Stephen and the conversion of Paul. Here, at the end of Acts, we’re left with the ultimate cliffhanger: an accused Paul stands trial before Felix and Agrippa and appeals to Caesar. He’s then put on a ship to Italy, caught in a storm, shipwrecked on an island, and bitten by a viper. After all this, Paul is finally in Rome to await trial before Nero.

In the last bit of recorded history on Paul, he makes a tireless case to the Roman Jews for the kingdom of God - a spiritual kingdom of heart change instead of the worldly kingdom the Jews were expecting - that falls on dull hearts and closed ears. Even still, Paul proclaims the gospel “with all boldness and without hindrance”. That’s where it ends. Luke leaves us right in the middle of this massive “dot-dot-dot.”

Unlike my texting habits, the next page in the history of the Church is not a mystery. The same Spirit that moves in the book of Acts moves in us today. The same gospel that transforms lives in Acts is transforming lives now. The same calling for believers then is on us now: to be disciples of Christ and to make disciples of Christ.

REACT 4	Read Acts 28:23-27. Where in your life have you been expecting God to provide a worldly kingdom and turned a dull heart to the transforming message of the gospel? Pray for your heart to be soft, your ears to be receptive, and your eyes to be open.					
5X5 5	Read Acts 28:24. Discipleship is hard. Thank God for the ways you've seen Him change hearts this year and pray that even when you're met with disbelief, you will have the strength to proclaim the gospel with all boldness and without hindrance to your 5.					
STUDY 6	<table border="1"><tr><td data-bbox="274 949 347 1006">Day 1 Pray</td><td data-bbox="367 949 450 1006">Day 2 Observe</td><td data-bbox="481 949 595 1006">Day 3 Understand</td><td data-bbox="611 949 709 1006">Day 4 Reference</td><td data-bbox="725 949 797 1006">Day 5 Apply</td></tr></table>	Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply
Day 1 Pray	Day 2 Observe	Day 3 Understand	Day 4 Reference	Day 5 Apply		

ACTS 1:8

YOU WILL BE
MY WITNESSES...
TO THE END OF
THE EARTH



